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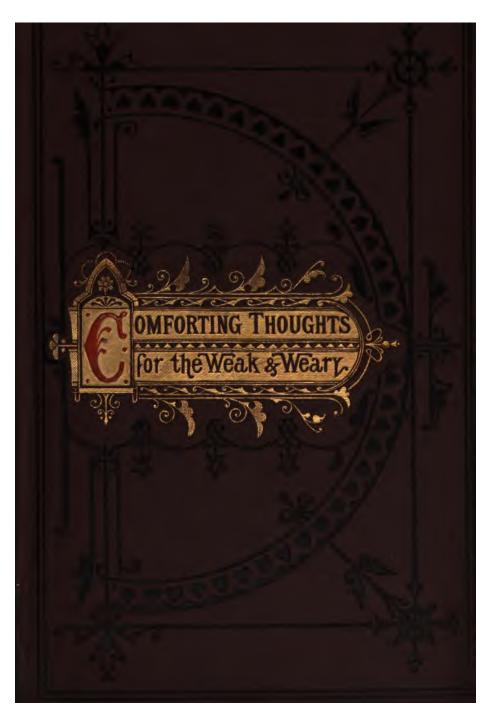
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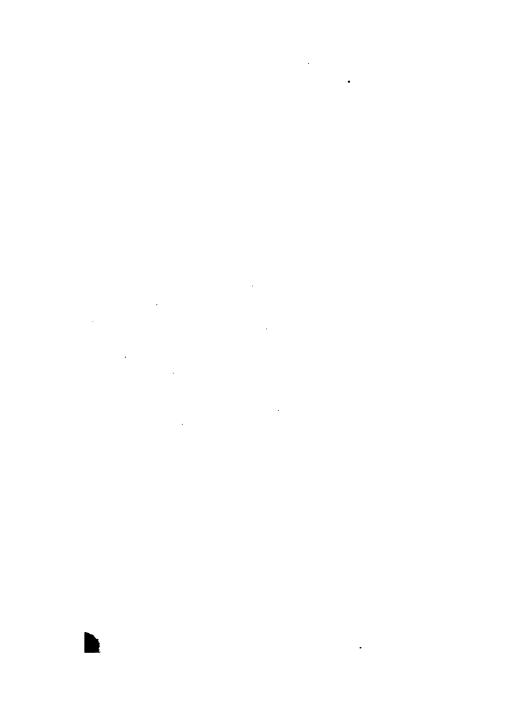
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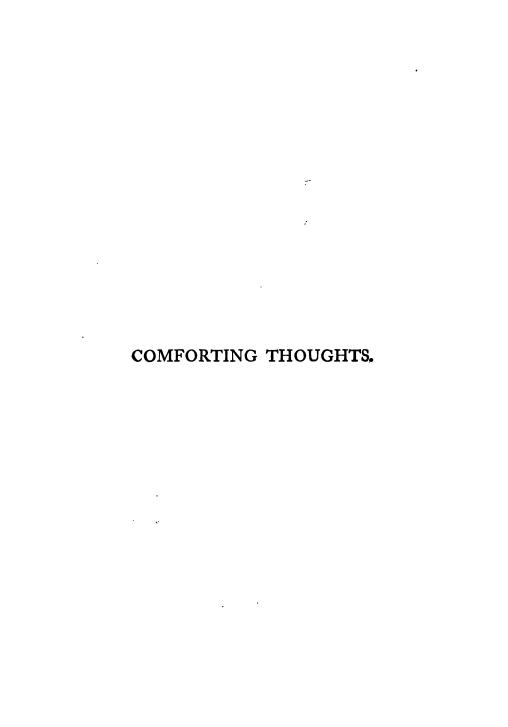
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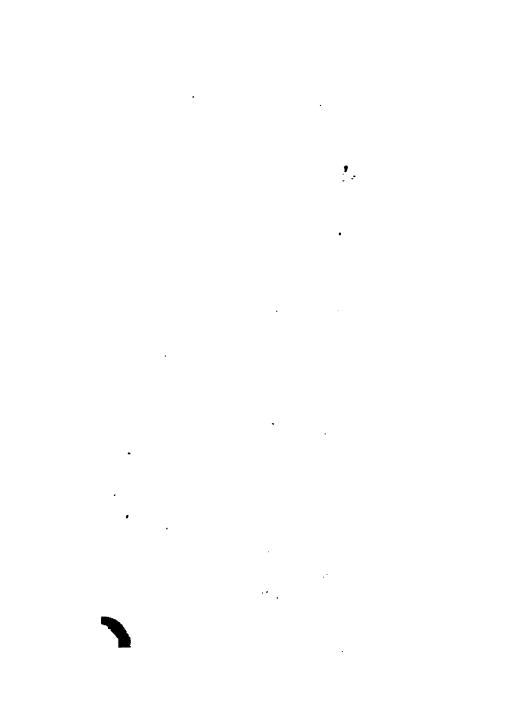
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# COMFORTING THOUGHTS

FOR

## THE WEAK AND WEARY.

BRIEF MEDITATIONS ON PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

SELECTED FROM THE WORKS OF

# THE REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH,

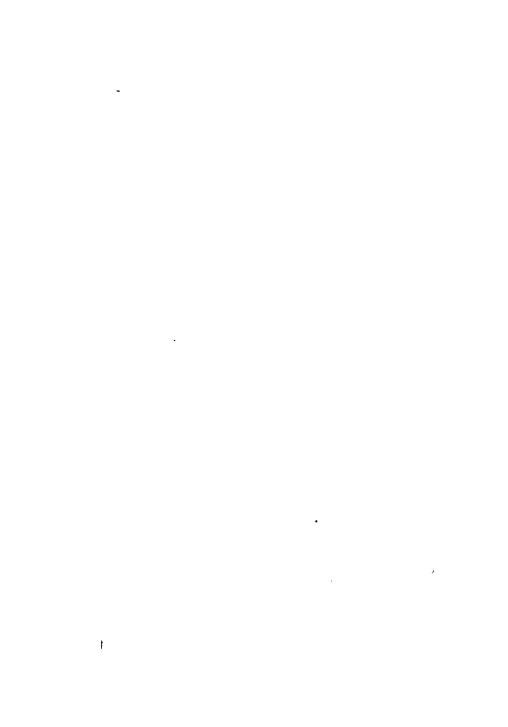
FORMERLY RECTOR OF WATTON,

SECOND EDITION.



SEELEY, JACKSON, & HALLIDAY, 54, FLEET STREET, LONDON. MDCCCLXXI.

101. f. .331.



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# COMFORT FROM THOUGHTS OF JESUS.

# CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF SINNERS.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."—I TIM. i. 15.

SEVERAL times the expression, saying, is prefixed to any truth of peculiar importance (I Tim. iii. I; iv. 8, 9; 2 Tim. ii. II). I suppose that before the Apostles' Creed was compiled, these were used as a kind of watchword among Christians, containing the most important and leading doctrines of the Gospel.

This saying is *faithful*. This is the grand point, to know that we rest on a rock, when we rest on this promise—

# 2 COMFORT FROM THOUGHTS OF JESUS.

that heaven and earth shall pass away, but it shall not pass away. It is also worthy of all acceptation, for all classes; for the most eminent saint, like St. Paul, and the most abandoned sinner that ever breathed; for high and low, for rich and poor, learned or unlearned, weak or strong—worthy to govern all our faculties; spirit, soul, and the whole man should be constrained by the love of Christ (2 Cor. v. 14, 15).

What then is this faithful saying? Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. What is sin? Go to a hospital; see the wretchedness on every side; visit, with the eye of faith, the torments of the worm that never dies, and the fire that never can be quenched. But, more than all, behold the bloody sweat in Gethsemane; the anguish and sufferings of God's only Son on Mount Calvary, and then see what sin is. Sinners—poor, wretched sinners—these were the objects that brought the blessed

Saviour from his glorious throne, to suffer and die as a man. He saves from the guilt, condemnation, pollution, and power of sin.

Notice that expression, into the world. Will He then leave the world a prey to sin? No, this "world" is a pledge, that all the ends of the world shall be saved, and worship Him.

St. Paul says, Of whom I am chief. When we consider how he had been labouring (for thirty years, perhaps) in the service of his Heavenly Master, and what an extended blessing he had been to others, the ballast of his soul in this state of blessedness was a growing conviction of his own sinfulness. He saw more of his own heart than of any other person's. A Christian knows all the wanderings, distractions, formalities of his own heart in worship, while to others he appears quite devout. A nearer view of the Divine purity increases our sense of sin.

#### CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE.

"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."—I JOHN ii. 1.

THERE remains in the Christian the old man, the flesh, as well as the new man, and in many things we offend all; there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not. Those saints of God about whose sinfulness after their conversion little is said in the Bible, Daniel and Paul, have left the most humble confessions of their own sinfulness. We must not be surprised if, as we pay more attention to religion, we seem to grow more vile and sinful. Those who know most of themselves, do not see in themselves a thousandth part of the evil God sees in them. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins.

Seeing we are thus sinful, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Observe, first, He is altogether righteous, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Then, He is with the Father, always in his presence; the Lamb as it had been slain stood in the midst of the throne. Then He is our Advocate; the word may also mean Comforter.

Let us examine some of the grounds of comfort we have in Christ being our Advocate. First, He is inexpressibly dear to God, He lay in his bosom from all eternity; the love of the Father to the Son is intense—utterly inconceivable. Is not this a ground of comfort? Again, He wears our very form, He ascended with it into heaven, He pleads there for us, as his brethren after the flesh. Again, He has actually borne our sins, He appears for us

# 6 COMFORT FROM THOUGHTS OF JESUS.

as our substitute, He pleads that our sins were put away by his blood, that He obeyed the law for us. He prays for spiritual gifts for us, He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Then observe the person of the Advocate, "Jesus," God our Saviour, "Christ," the anointed one, altogether righteous. What a wonderful truth is this, that one perfectly righteous pleads for us sinners! It is absolutely necessary that our Advocate should be righteous. God cannot look upon a sinner; everything sinful is an abomination in his sight. Oh, look to this Advocate. Ever approach to God only in his name. Ever rely on his merits.

#### CHRIST OUR MEDIATOR.

"He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."—Heb. ix. 15.

When any person has offended another by gross misconduct, his very person becomes so displeasing, as to make a request by him unwelcome. If our whole course of conduct towards a benefactor of the utmost wisdom, kindness, and bounty, from whom we have received innumerable benefits, has been one of ingratitude and injuries, the sense of alienation, even in our own minds, makes it impossible for us to come with confidence of heart to such an injured benefactor, and solicit favours from him. Those favours would at once be granted to a beloved object, to a child, or to one dear to such a benefactor and intimate

with him. But the guilty offender justly fears that his very person, associated as it must be with his misconduct, will quite hinder the success of his petitions.

This is our real situation; yet we are far too blind to it. Prone we are by nature to make excuses for our misconduct, and to justify ourselves; far are we from thinking that we need a Mediator.

But let us learn our true position. The law of God is holy, just, and good. It requires us to love our God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves. Obedience to it would be universal happiness. Its reward and its penalty, just and righteous altogether, are, The man that doeth these, things shall live by them, and The soul that sinneth, it shall die. We have all daily, hourly, and times without number, broken this good and holy law. Why are we not cut off? How is it that sinful man is spared by the holy God, and has

been spared now for a period of nearly six thousand years? All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; how is it that God, for a season, passes by and remits these sins? It is all owing to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. This is the reason why a spared world of rebellious creatures is permitted to continue, notwithstanding the curse of the law, and the justice, and the truth, and the holiness of the Great Jehovah.

#### CHRIST THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."—
Rev. xxi. 23.

Heaven's own light, in pure and perfect day, makes needless the brightest present and earthly displays of light and glory. When the Lord himself is present, these displays of his glory become needless; when the Church itself is perfected and visible in its resurrection-glory, its fairest and most beautiful emblems are not required. The glory of God lightens the city, and the Lamb is the light thereof. It was the greatest privilege of the Jewish high priest, for a transient period, once in the year, to enter into the Holiest of Holies, and behold there a glorious manifestation of God. This will be our portion in a fuller glory, and that unceasingly and for ever.

The Lamb will be the light of that temple, not only as having Himself redeemed all for it, but as Himself unfolding to us the glorious character of our God, and Himself forming one grand theme of all our songs and praises. With what joy shall we traverse all the heights, and lengths, and depths, and breadths of Divine love, and mark all the fountains which supply those streams of grace and love that gladden all creation! How will each attribute and perfection of God, and the wonders of his past providence, and the riches of his present love, and the exhaustless provision for yet unknown and endless blessings, continually furnish us with fresh springs of joy! As they are laid open to our admiring souls by the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, feeding us and leading us unto those living fountains, they will cause us again and again to burst out with exulting exclamations of glad surprise, Who is a God like unto Thee? in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. How will the opening out, and the full shining upon us of those bright and blessed truths (in the Scripture the last recorded descriptions of our God), God is light, and God is love, swell the universal song! All the redeemed and angelic host will through eternity rejoice in singing, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever.

Connected with this vision of God in his glory, is our perfect likeness to Him; the Divine image lost by the fall at length completely restored. His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. Thus will the prayer of the Psalmist be fully answered: Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

#### THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST.

"What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."—I Peter ii. 20, 21, 23.

If you would run with patience the race that is set before you, look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame. Thirty years was He subject to his parents at Nazareth, patiently waiting to enter on his ministry. When tempted by Satan with a proffer of the immediate possession of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, without conflict or difficulty, on worshipping him, patiently waiting his Father's will, He rejected the temptation with abhorrence. When the people would

have crowned Him as king, He departed into solitude. When Peter would have defended Him by force of arms, He patiently rebuked him thus, Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels. Remember his divine glory, his unsearchable wisdom, his almighty power, then see Him beaten with stripes, mocked, spit upon, crowned with thorns, dressed in a purple robe, a malefactor preferred before Him, carrying his cross, nailed to a tree and taunted there with bitter railings, and how inconceivable the patience which endured it all! As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth.

Wonderful still is the same patience. Now He has ascended and is seated at the right hand of God. He has all power in heaven and earth. Why delays He to judge the quick and dead at his appear-

ing and kingdom? Touched He is to the quick with the sufferings of his people; they fill up that which is behind of his sufferings—in all their afflictions He is afflicted, but the long-suffering of God waits (1 Peter iii. 20), the Lord is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. His mind is intently fixed on the fulness of time in which He shall return. Again and again He gives messages, Behold, I come quickly, as if eager to enter on the promised recompence and joy; but yet He waits, that the whole number of his elect may be gathered, and the fulness of bliss and glory, promised to Him in the completed body of his church, all be realized.

#### THE KING OF GLORY.

"Immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."—Rev. iv. 2, 3.

Who is this King of Glory? Who is this most worthy Judge eternal? It is our Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures frequently speak of Him as presiding over all the stupendous scenes of this day. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. The throne of judgment is therefore called the judgment seat of Christ. And He it is who shall be seated on this great white throne.

Oh how different from his first coming! Then He was shut out of human dwellings; born in a stable, a weak and helpless babe in his virgin mother's arms; cradled in a manger; subject to his parents; brought up as a carpenter; despised and rejected of men. Then He was a man of sorrows, not having where to lay his head. Then He was Himself tried, judged, condemned, spit upon, nailed to a cross, crucified with thieves, and laid in a grave. This He submitted to, this He underwent for you, for me, that we might, through his sufferings for us, escape judgment, condemnation, shame, and everlasting contempt.

But now, how changed! He appears infinitely more glorious by the contrast of that humiliation to which, in his love and pity, for man's redemption, He submitted. He now is manifested in his true and proper character, as the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His face shining as the sun, myriads of angels attending upon Him, the whole universe waiting to hear the decisions of his lips, and that voice

18 COMFORT FROM THOUGHTS OF JESUS. which is to fix for ever the destiny of man.

O lover of Jesus! think of this and take courage. That Being in whom thou hast trusted, whom thou hast made thy righteousness, whose Spirit thou hast received, who is thy Redeemer and thy Saviour: He, He is judge of all the earth. Thou hast confessed Him here, He will confess thee there.

O despiser of Jesus! tremble and be alarmed. This is He whom thou art rejecting; this is He whom thou slightest. O agree with Him quickly. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" (Ps. ii. 12).

## CHRIST'S REWARD.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."—JUDE 24.

THE rejoicing at the Lord's presenting his bride, the Church, before the presence of the Divine glory, is the sublime, heavenly subject brought before us in these words. First, observe the joy of Christ. He presents the Church to the Father with exceeding joy: it is the result of his counsels with the Father and the Holy Ghost before the world began; it is the result of four thousand years of preparation before his first coming; the result of all his humiliation and agony; the result of his patient waiting for two thousand years, bearing with the iniquities of men, and the infirmities of his people. It is the concentrated joy of soul after soul gathered together, consummated, and completed in glory; myriads of saints raised in their resurrection-bodies, with purified and immortal spirits, for ever holy, for ever happy, and He himself having accomplished all, at the costly price of his own blood.

What joy is this to Christ? He ever had it in his contemplation. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. And what joy to Christ will be all the glory this day will bring to his Father, all the explanation it will afford of the mysteries hitherto spread over all things. Our blessed Saviour will then rejoice with exceeding joy.

But to another class it will be a day of rejoicing. Angels will rejoice. If there is joy among them over one sinner that repenteth, what will be the accumulated joy, when all those repenting sinners are brought together in resurrection glory before God! What will be the acclamations of joy

among the angels, when they all cry out, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever! And it angels have joy in that day, what blessedness is in store for the people of Christ, when they hear the invitation, Well done! good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord. What joy in the complete deliverance from the condemnation of the wicked, from fear and sorrow and anxiety and weariness; what joy in perfect holiness without one spot of sin, in perfect glory without one reproach, in the society of all we love and venerate, and that too for ever and ever, and with Him who alone has made us what we are! Well may it be called exceeding joy.

## COMFORT FROM THE BIBLE.

#### THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S WORD.

"The Word of our God shall stand for ever."—
ISAIAH Xl. 8.

Few things are more calculated to show the value of the Scriptures, than Christ's attention to them during his ministry on earth. He resisted temptation by quoting them. In his discourses He constantly appealed to them, and expressly commanded his disciples to search them. He asserted that every jot and tittle was to be fulfilled, and though heaven and earth shall pass away, yet his words should all receive their full accomplishment.

His apostles followed his steps. At the

opening of their ministry, on that memorable day of Pentecost, when about three thousand souls were added to the Church. they brought before the Jews their own Scriptures, by which the people being convinced of their sins, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, gladly received the word and embraced the gospel. The apostles by their own writings completed the sacred volume, and warmly commended those who searched the Scriptures to ascertain the truth of what they themselves preached. Thus the word of the Lord went forth from Jerusalem, and the nations of the known earth were converted to Christianity. It was not by human power or influence that Luther prevailed, but simply through the mighty energy of the Divine Spirit ever accompanying the diffusion of the pure truths of God. The great truths of the Bible were gradually diffused by him. He says of himself, "I had the whole body of

#### 24 COMFORT FROM THE BIBLE.

Papists to oppose. I preached, I wrote, I pressed on men's consciences the positive declarations of the word of God: but I used not a particle of force. It is not I, I repeat it, but the Divine Word which has done everything." The fundamental principle of the Reformation is the certainty, clearness and fulness of God's truth in all things relating to salvation.

#### THE SURE GUIDE.

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."—Ps. cxix. 105.

Suppose a person, compelled to quit a foreign country, were invited to return home, to receive a large possession which his father had promised him-suppose he is entirely unacquainted with the road he has to go, but knows that it is often rugged, difficult, and dangerous; that there are also many false guides to mislead him, and many enemies to encounter; and that thus he will be exposed, not only to the loss of the promised possession, but of everything he has, and even of life itself. What would be such a person's chief inquiries? Where can I get a sure direction? Is there any protector who can defend me from my enemies? With what delight he would hear, "Your father has given you a plain,

full and particular direction, and an allsufficient protector!" How diligently would he look at this direction as he went along, and how entirely would he trust his protector!

This journey is the Christian's life. God is his Father; heaven is his home; eternal bliss is the promised possession; Christ is the all-sufficient Protector, the Captain of our salvation, who has Himself traversed the road, and conquered every enemy, and who now guards and defends all who commit themselves to Him; and The Bible affords a sure direction to God, to heaven, to everlasting bliss. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

By means of the Bible, God himself directs your paths. It is the voice of the Creator, speaking distinctly and diligently to us, his creatures. In all important points, it is so PLAIN, "that he who runs

may read." It is also so FULL and particular, that you may find in it something adapted to remove your most perplexing doubts, and to guide you aright through your greatest difficulties. Its fulness speaks its divine Author.

#### THE CHRISTIAN TREASURY.

"The Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure."— MATT. xiii. 44.

OUR Lord speaks of a treasure, out of which things new and old are to be brought. The possession of truth and heavenly wisdom, is man's best riches and treasure (Prov. viii. 18—21). What a treasure had our Lord Jesus Christ himself -even all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii. 3). We receive out of his fulness, and bear the treasure in earthen vessels to others. We have to gather the sacred oil of divine knowledge, day by day, for ourselves, that we may be enriched, and shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. Let us see, then, that we gain that only which God accounts real treasure.

A heavenly traffic and commerce must

be carried on with different kingdoms to procure this treasure. There is the kingdom of Providence, where God the Father, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, is continually illustrating his will and his ways. There is the kingdom of the revealed word, where we may ever be gaining a still increasing knowledge of the unsearchable riches of Christ. And there is the kingdom of the Spirit; the Holy Ghost guides into all truth, and by his diversities of gifts and graces, continually gives fresh illustrations of the manifold grace of God.

The word of Christ may, indeed, more emphatically be said to be our chief treasury, as it informs us of, and guides us to, every other, and is itself God's own truth, and is the test to which everything else is to be brought. It is peculiarly the treasure for the teacher, comprehending, in history or prophecy, all ages, all persons,

and their eternal destinies yet to come; all doctrines, all commands, all promises, all true knowledge of man and of God. The exhaustless character of this treasure may well encourage us to draw freely from it. We have only to search humbly and prayerfully, and we shall never want seasonable and suitable truth.

## LIGHT UPON THE WORD.

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."—Ps. cxix. 18.

THE Scriptures are like the material heavens—they are, if such an expression may be used, the tabernacle in which the Sun of Righteousness dwells. When this glorious light appears in the sacred pages, it shines with pre-eminent brightness, eclipsing every other. There are, however, other lights borrowed from it, revolving around it—the lights of prophets, apostles, martyrs, and the Church of God in all ages; and these in subserviency to the great luminary, assist in guiding our paths.

The lights of heaven are always shining, though often hid from us. Our ignorance, our pride, and our prejudices do what God threatened to do to Egypt (Ezekiel xxxii. 7, 8), they cover the heavens and make the

stars thereof dark; they cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon does not give her light; they make dark over us all the bright lights of heaven, and set darkness upon the land; and we love this darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil. An astronomer and an ignorant person looking at the heavens, survey the same glorious objects with very different views. They both may admire the outward splendour; but he who has long and patiently studied the heavenly bodies, and often beheld them through a powerful telescope, discovers a grandeur and magnificence, a harmony and utility, a beautiful and regular motion, unobserved by a common eye, and which give him exalted ideas of his Creator's power and glory; nor does his knowledge rest in mere speculation, for he can apply it to many valuable practical purposes.

There is a similar difference between the real and nominal Christian when they read the Bible. They both may see the beauty of language, and be equally struck with mere outward attractions; but the real Christian, who daily studies his Bible, and brings its distant objects near by faith, finds in it such displays of the glory of God, such harmony, consistency, and beauty, and such plain and practical rules for his daily conduct, as fill him with wonder and delight.

#### IIL.

# COMFORT FROM PRAYER.

#### FAITH AND PRAYER.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."—St. Jude 20.

We are to consider the little flock of Christ, and their duties to themselves and to the wicked around them. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. We see here that while the ungodly are raging on every side, the Church of God is preparing to be presented blameless before his presence. The Apostle does not say, Be not carried away with their delusions; but he puts before them the high and holy duties in which they are to be advancing

in the midst of all the wickedness of the ungodly.

Observe here, faith is the foundation-grace, the beginning of all those excellent gifts to which the Christian is to be daily adding, as we see in 2 Peter i. 5: And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge. It is not to be left alone, but in building on it it is daily to be enlarged and manifested. That faith which rests on Jesus as the sure foundation and the chief corner-stone, the Rock of Ages, is most holy in contrast with the ungodly lusts of sinners; faith is of all the graces the most sanctifying, working by love.

The strength for this is praying in the Holy Ghost; this is the main-spring of our constant growth. All our power is out of ourselves, and in the might of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, prayer is the great secret of the Christian life,—praying always

with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance. It is easy to repeat forms of prayer, or by the intellect to pray extempore; but there is no real prayer from the heart of fallen man but what the Holy Ghost inspires, and that Holy Spirit is really given to them that ask. In the midst of formalism on the one side, and lawlessness on the other, real Christians are to be abounding in spiritual worship, and so to be strengthened against all their temptations.

What an important direction this is in these evil days. To what a blessed state it raises us poor sinners each hour, even to be lifted up by the power of the Holy Ghost to a blessed communion with our heavenly Father. God give it to us more and more!

#### EARNESTNESS IN PRAYER.

"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens."—LAM. iii. 41.

PRAYER is the cry of faith, the way in which grace is obtained and increased, and it is founded on our sense of need. Encouraged by the assurance that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, and that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we gladly avail ourselves of the gracious invitation. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Not boldly only, but earnestly; you must strive in prayer: cold petitions will not do. David says, My soul followeth hard after God: the words denote earnest and strong desire. As the drowning man would cry for help, as

Peter cried, Lord, save, or I perish, so must we cry for grace.

Oh, be assured, careless prayers and heartless wishes never yet marked a saved You must wrestle with God in prayer, if you would receive effectual grace. There will be strong cries and tears like our Saviour's. Nothing will content you but God's favour and love, if you are in earnest for it. What you need above all other things is God's grace. Whatever else you get, without this you are miserably poor; whatever else you lose, if you get this you are unspeakably happy. Grace is the seed of glory—grace is the first thing. The Lord will give grace and then glory. Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. this shows the earnestness with which you should pray.

Every event, every circumstance of life, is to the Christian a season of grace. Just

as in the cultivation of a garden, sometimes the gardener digs the ground, sometimes he prunes the trees, sometimes he sows the seed, sometimes he plucks up the weeds; but all is to make the garden beautiful and fruitful: so our God, in varied ways, deals with our souls, that grace may flourish in us, and bring forth fruit to his glory and our everlasting salvation.

#### THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER.

"They shall call on my name, and I will hear them:

I will say, It is my people, and they shall say,
The Lord is my God."—Zech. xiii. 9.

MEN in general think it an honour to be admitted into the company of those who are distinguished by their rank, their power, or their attainments. They feel it a privilege to converse with a man of the first consequence in the state—a man eminent in wisdom or knowledge, or the monarch of a mighty empire. A Christian justly reckons it no small privilege to be permitted for a season to associate with a person of peculiar piety.

And if, while the greatest good may be obtained from a distinguished person, there be only a limited time in which we can go to him, the importance of using an opportunity that is offered is evidently greatly increased. If we can say, Now the way of access is open, but it will soon be closed; now you may hold converse, and get intimately acquainted with him; you may obtain all you want; you may secure a lasting interest in his affections; he has invited you to come to him, and you will never have this privilege offered again;—surely no other arguments need be urged to induce a man wanting his help to go to him without delay.

When the Lord of glory dwelt on earth, we often read of the great multitudes who assembled together and crowded around Him to see and to hear Him. On one occasion, we find even a rich man, Zaccheus, unable to approach Him, and climbing a tree to have a transient glimpse of so remarkable a character. Had we lived at that time, and possessed anything of our present knowledge, we should doubtless have thought it a high honour

to be in his company, and, like Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear his words.

The privilege was counted the more valuable in seasons of difficulty. When any were in sickness or danger, and believed that if they could see our Lord, He would help them, they then desired his presence with peculiar earnestness. When Lazarus is dying, then his sisters send a special message to their Lord. When the disciples are in the storm, they awaken Him by saying, Carest Thou not that we perish? When the people are sick, they break through the roof of a dwelling to come to Him, or press through the crowd to touch the hem of his garment.

# COMFORT IN HOURS OF SORROW.

## THE REDEMPTION OF THE BODY.

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."—ISA. XXVI. 19.

THE spirits of the faithful are now indeed with Christ in Paradise (Luke xxiii. 43; Phil. i. 23), in great joy and peace, and rest. But their happiness is incomplete without their resurrection-bodies. They have not the capabilities of usefulness, of glorifying God, and of full enjoyment which they will have when they are raised from the dead and enter on the offices of their royal priesthood (Rev. v. 10). They

without us are not to be made perfect; but we are all made perfect together. Wonderful, indeed, is the preparation for their heavenly calling. Their bodies decay and corrupt. They mingle with the dust; the different particles may be scattered far and wide, yet the identity of body from the same seed, as in the grain sown in the earth, will never be lost sight of by Him who is everywhere present. The world is full of striking emblems of this. Each spring rises out of each winter, each day from each night, each awakening from each sleep, each birth from each womb, each blade from each grain, each flower from each bud, each butterfly from each chrysalis, as if to repeat constantly in our ears, There is a resurrection from the grave. The same omnipotent hand which formed each human being in successive stages, from age to age, will in one and the same instant put forth its divine energy in quickening the remnant of each sleeping body, and bringing them at one and the same moment from every clime, every region, and every period, into the vast and glorious general assembly and church of the firstborn.

The resurrection of the saints has connected with it an all-important event to the saints then living on the earth—their change and happy translation at the same time.

There is an order, indeed, as it regards the living and the dead saints. The dead saints are first raised, and then the living saints all changed (I Cor. xv. 51), but there is no lengthened interval; all takes place with the most joyful rapidity, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (ver. 52). While the saints are viewing the resurrection of the dead, the wondrous transformation begins to bless them also.

# THE CHRISTIAN'S INHERITANCE.

"Heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him."—JAMES ii. 5.

THE purchase of redemption was completed on the cross. The beneficial effects of redemption will last through eternity. The Scriptures show us that Christians have now only the seal and earnest of that completed redemption which we shall have.

St. Paul tells the Ephesians, After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory. Christians have a glorious inheritance; it is a sure possession; it was purchased by the blood of Jesus, and we are waiting for its complete enjoyment. We are in

the situation of heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and under the teaching of the Divine Spirit, are preparing for the possession of our future glory.

This was the hope of the Church from the beginning. Completed redemption in the kingdom of glory is the happy end and issue of the trials, sorrows, burdens, and afflictions of the Christian, and the full reward for everything that he may have given up in consequence of his believing God's word and acting upon it. For this glory he is waiting.

So the Apostle describes the believer, now full of suffering and conflict, longing and hoping for that day. We ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.

But it is not merely the Christian that shall be redeemed. The earth, and all that dwell upon it, after that purifying baptism of fire which is so clearly foretold (2 Peter iii.), shall also be renewed. We, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Surely we should hasten the coming of the day of God (2 Peter iii.), when all this dark, sorrowful, and evil scene shall pass away, and the new heavens and the new earth appear. Oh, with what holy thirsting should we say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

#### THE RESURRECTION BODY.

"It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:
it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it
is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is
sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual
body."—I COR. xv. 42—44.

THERE are four remarkable properties of the human body, as raised from the grave, which distinguish it from that flesh and blood which cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

We read, first, that it is raised in incorruption, and so entirely free from all that capability of infirmity and decay, corruption and death, to which our present bodies are liable.

Secondly,—it is raised in glory. There are different degrees of glory on earth. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lilies; but all earthly

glories must be faint figures of the inconceivable glory of the heavenly body. Our Lord showed his three favoured disciples something of it on the Mount of Transfiguration. After telling them that they should not taste of death till they had seen the kingdom of God come with power, He shortly after was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light, and there talked with Him Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory. We, too, are to bear the image of the heavenly. Our vile body is to be fashioned like unto his glorious body.

Thirdly,—it is raised in power. Now, how weak and frail is the human body; we dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth; but how mighty and powerful will each human body then have become! We shall be equal to the angels, who excel in strength, as we may see when one angel

destroys in one night 185,000 of the host of Sennacherib.

Fourthly,—it is raised a spiritual body. It is relieved from all the present infirmities, and from all the present temptations of flesh and blood; it may possibly stand in no need of meat and drink, and those supplies of earthly things which our present bodies require: actuated entirely by the Holy Spirit and quickened by Him, all its motions and faculties will correspond to its holy and heavenly nature. There will be no such thing as impediment to its desires, -in distance and intervening elements: Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go (Ezek. i. 15—28). Thus we see our Lord, after his resurrection, appearing, and vanishing, and entering rooms with closed doors in a supernatural manner.

# THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION.

"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."— MAL. iii. 3.

Just as when a parent punishes a child for a fault that the child has committed, the fault is the primary cause of punishment, but the love of the parent, having respect to the child's best and most enduring good, is the deeper reason of the correction, so it is with our God; only with a fuller wisdom and grace beyond all comparison.

Here, then, we have the full reason of all the afflictions through which sinful men pass. There is a stubbornness of evil to be subdued; there is a flinty hardness of sin to be broken; the unsightly mineral has to be purged from its dross in the severe furnace, and when taken out of the furnace it has to be wrought by many a blow of the hammer and many a sharp application of the suitable instrument, to make it a useful and beautiful vessel for the Master's house.

The more, too, the vessel excels in beauty, the longer and the more painful is the process by which that more perfect beauty is attained.

We cannot, indeed, now, till the end be accomplished, see the reason for all this previous suffering. A person seeing valuable ore of gold or silver gathered from the mine, and unacquainted with the way of its being purified, might be amazed to see it cast into a heated furnace. He would see something accomplished, indeed, in its coming out pure and refined. But when he saw this purified metal put under the powerful hammer, and again and again smitten with heavy blows, he might say, Will it not be dashed to pieces? But still he would, sensible of his ignorance, trust the workman for his wisdom and skill.

# 54 COMFORT IN HOURS OF SORROW.

And shall not we trust Him who has both infinite wisdom and boundless love, and who measures every trial and every blow as best for the final good of his children?

The reason of all God's dealings with his people has yet to be fully manifested: What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter (John xiii. 7). Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it (I Cor. iii. 13). That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ (I Peter i. 7).

# SOLACE IN HOURS OF PAIN.

# SUFFERING A PREPARATION FOR GLORY.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

—Jude 21.

Keep yourselves in the love of God. This is the richest and sweetest direction of the Holy Scriptures, continually to be realizing God's love. It is a difficult lesson, sometimes, to spell out God's love in our trials; but as the child begins with the alphabet, and then passes on to syllables and longer words, till by degrees all reading becomes easy to it, so in trying to learn God's love in everything will it open out clearly and beautifully, till by degrees we see the most wonderful love in our hardest trials; real, full, persevering, constant, unfathomable,

unsearchable love in all his dealings with us, whether in the shining sun of prosperity, or in the dark cloud of adversity.

Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. What a perfect contrast to the self-righteous spirit of worldly men! The Holy Spirit knows what is in man; He knows that the very best of us are full of corruption and infirmities, continually falling short of the glory of God; and however we may appear excellent to others, we are, in the sight of God, full of shortcomings and sins; therefore He gives this sweet closing direction, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian is to look for mercy amid all the afflictions he has endured, and amid all the sufferings through which he has passed for Christ's sake. His trials prepare him for his glory. Those sovereigns who have been the greatest blessings to

our country went through great trials to their crown. Our blessed Redeemer himself learnt obedience by the things which He suffered. His sufferings prepared the way for his being a Priest on his throne; and I believe one great reason of the sufferings of Christians is to prepare them to be monarchs—the royal priesthood who shall hereafter reign over the earth—to reign in grace, long-suffering, and goodness to their fellow-men.

This, then, should be our present position, looking for mercy. And observe, it is not merely mercy in general; many are looking in that way for mercy, but this is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ;—that mercy which He purchased, and which He bestows, that mercy which is peculiar to Him who left his Father's throne to become a man of sorrows, to come into a world of sin and of sinners. That is the mercy we want, and which suits our necessities.

# THE GOOD PHYSICIAN.

'Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed."— JER. xvii. 14.

THE Lord Jesus Christ is the only effectual physician who heals every wound. Our sorrows are caused by our sins, and we are too proud to see and acknowledge the painful truth. To meet this extreme corruption of human nature, One altogether without sin. One so exalted as to be above all involuntary suffering, came from heaven. He is the only begotten Son of God, and one with God, and yet He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. This amazing expression of Divine love melts our corrupt hearts entirely by its exceeding grace and loving-kindness, and discovers to us the cause and the evil of our disease, without arming against our real interests, our prejudices.

It shows us, in the sufferings of another,

what sin really is, and so opens the way for our truly seeing our own character and God's character, and loathing and abhorring ourselves for our vileness. Thus, by his stripes we are healed; not only has He atoned for all our guilt, and has procured the free remission of all our sins, but our mind is brought to a right state. We are thus enabled to view God's dealings with us in their just light, as the dealings of paternal love; and the way is prepared, either for the removal of afflictions, by their having answered their designed end, or, if it be to our profit that they should be continued, for their becoming both greater and fuller blessings. They become such by present sanctification, and by preparing for us a richer crown of glory hereafter; working now so as to produce peaceable fruits of righteousness, and also working out for us hereafter a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

This is the true healing of affliction, when we can feel that we are in the hands of a skilful physician, whose remedies, if painful, are wise and healing, and who prefers our future and established health to any merely transient and temporary revival, that leaves us only the more weak and disabled afterwards. Such a skilful physician, Christian reader, is that blessed Saviour, to whom we would recommend you to apply in every sorrow, from a personal experience of his ability to save. is not a vain thing, it is a reality; it is an incalculable blessing. He can, He really does, accomplish his appointed office, to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isa. lxi. 2, 3).

# THOUGHTS FOR HOURS OF REST.

# CHRISTIAN GROWTH.

"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."—I JOHN ii. 13.

HERE are three different classes addressed. Our Lord distinguishes them as the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear. The great doctrine of different degrees of grace, according to our progress in the Christian life, runs through the Scriptures. So we read, The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord. A Christian is not to be a stunted tree, which grows no farther.

The first stage mentioned is little children. The views, the knowledge, the graces of a young Christian are all imperfect. There is the reality of spiritual life; he has received the new birth, and the new creation, but he is in a state of infancy and weakness: he looks much to others, and is guided and directed by them. The infant has its most appropriate food in simple scriptural truth. As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. If there be a real thirst after God's word, and a sucking in of its sweetness day by day, the infant will gradually ripen into the maturity of the next stage. Young men,—a very expressive term, denoting the strength, vigour, activity, enlarging knowledge and zeal of that class. Thirdly, we have the fathers in Christ, denoting their lengthened experience, their knowledge of the emptiness of the world, their knowledge of false doctrines, and of

the way in which Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and their enlarged insight into his many temptations.

As the Christian advances to maturity, he more and more forgets the things that are behind, and reaches forth unto those that are before, that he may know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. He looks off other things, that he may keep his eyes fixed on Christ. Christ is his Alpha and Omega,—his all in all.

And the word of God abideth in you. Beautiful expression! no merely careless, hurried reading of the Bible as a task, glad when it is over; but in his law doth he meditate day and night, everything bringing Scripture to the mind. Here is a great mark of growth in grace, from infancy to youth, to have the word of the Lord always before our minds, and occupying and mingling with all our thoughts.

#### THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST.

"The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."—2 Cor. xiii. 14.

THE communion of the Holy Ghost is the closing blessing. He is the communicator of all gifts and graces. It is He alone, sent by the Father and the Son, who applies the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of the Father, to the sinner's heart. How multiplied are his gifts! To Him we owe the Holy Scriptures; be assured of this. Never be moved away from the simplicity of confidence, that they are really and truly, in all their parts, from Genesis to Revelation, whether doctrine, prophecy, or history, dictated entirely by Him, and therefore throughout and without reserve the pure word of the living God. All is communicated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. He only

THOUGHTS FOR HOURS OF REST. 65 is also the true Teacher, unfolding their meaning.

Every spiritual grace is imparted by the Holy Ghost, who converts and quickens the dead, and makes them living children of their heavenly Father. He is their Sanctifier, making them pure and holy. He is their Comforter, giving them joy in the midst of tribulation.

How blessed, then, is the communion of the Holy Ghost! He enlivens us when cold and dead. He cheers us when drooping and sorrowful. He bears with our many provocations. He seals us unto the day of redemption. He fills us with hope and joy.

O Christians, who have been effectually called to the knowledge of Christ, and who are waiting for Him, when you confess Christ before men—when you maintain the truth as it is in Jesus—when you worship God in the spirit—praise Him

with grateful hearts—delight in God—weep for sin—trust in Christ and love Him, and labour to spread the knowledge of Him to others,—it comes only from the grace of the Holy Spirit.

All this you can alone do by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. Give Him the glory of all that is good in you. Honour the Holy Ghost before a world that mocks Him. All his work is the earnest of your future inheritance. You are now to be formed after the image of God, in his likeness, to bear his beautiful image for ever in his heavenly kingdom. You are now the temples of the Holy Ghost. Walk worthy of your high calling, and give glory to the Spirit of God. He will abide with you for ever.

## THE CHRISTIAN A LIGHT IN THE WORLD.

"Ye are the light of the world."-MATT. v. 14.

EACH Christian must be a vessel of mercy to others; they must be as lights shining in a dark place, as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. Yes, if full of love ourselves, we must show love to others. Oh that each person who reads these lines may take to others a rich blessing! May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with all his people to bear them among their fellow-men. May you carry these blessings far and wide—into your families, into every circle, into every place. May you take the savour of them wherever you go.

This glorious blessing was not confined to the apostolic age: it is for all, for high

and low, rich and poor; all may be endowed with it, and so be enriched with better blessings than any that this world's wealth can procure. The promises are as fresh now as in the day when first given, in their power to bless. They never fail. All who partake of them diminish not aught from them; yea, the more there are that partake of them, the more joy increases. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, that your joy may be full. It does not take from the warmth of the sun that it shines on all regions, and crowns all lands with its blessing; so neither does the fulness of the blessing treasured up in Christ, lose any of its fulness by all partaking of it. your lights at this flame, and then seek to be the bearers more and more to others of the same joy, and light and love will spread till they fill our earth; while we ourselves are rejoicing in them, we shall increasingly be a blessing to our homes, our families, and our friends. Carry them also to your bitterest enemies—to those who most oppose you; meet them with this Divine atmosphere around you, and bless them also.

I remember well, at the close of the year 1815, when about to embark at Portsmouth on a visit to the missions of the Church Missionary Society in Africa, a dear minister and brother wished me, before going, to visit a venerable Christian near at hand, who was lying on his deathbed. I went, and told him I was going among the benighted Africans, and asked him what message I should take to them. "Take," he answered, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, and you will take a full blessing."

#### THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH.

"Ye are the temple of the living God."—2 Cor. vi. 16.

THE Church of Christ is compared in the Scriptures to the building of a temple, of which believers are the lively stones. are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Each stone is, by degrees only, fitted for its place, and it is only by degrees that stone is laid upon stone in its right position. It is compared to the growth of the human body. Maintaining the truth in love, we are to grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edify-

ing of itself in love. Before the temple was built, there was a vast preparation of materials; each stone was made ready before it was brought, so that there was neither axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house, while it was in building. So it is in this more glorious temple. From the beginning, each lively stone has been preparing for its exact use and position. and without noise, the heavenly Architect is preparing lively stone after lively stone exactly fitted for its place in his glorious temple. Not one is lost; each is gathered safely, and placed surely, and at last He shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it!

And, oh, let us exult in the thought, nothing is lost of all the Lord's past love to his people! They are taken away, indeed, one by one; they seem removed from us, but they are only gathered as jewels for the crown of glory, as precious

stones for the heavenly Jerusalem; and the day is just at hand when the Lord Fesus shall be revealed from heaven, and for ever glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

There is now in heaven a perfect unity in an orderly gradation of ranks; angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, have each their glorious office; and yet with this order of degrees, such a perfect unity and bliss, that a jarring note from one of their golden harps never interrupts the perfect harmony. Day and night they cease not to glorify God, with one mind and one song, ever crying out, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

#### THE ENLIGHTENING OF THE SPIRIT.

"Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."—Eph v. 8.

AT the creation, when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, the first effect was, God said: Let there be light, and there was light Thus it is in the new creation of the soul, for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Yesus Christ Christ is the true light, which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. Christ shows in the clearest and strongest of all lights God's love to every man, however sinful, at the very time that the evil of sin is also most powerfully manifested. Thus the Divine character has a blaze of light and glory thrown around it, calculated to attract

every sinner's heart, or leave him wholly without excuse if he neglects so great a salvation. And that there might be no possible reason but the wilful love of sin for this neglect, the Holy Spirit is promised to them that ask, to discover to us this blessed light in all its beauty and purity. Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth (John xvi. 13, 14).

The need of this Divine teaching arises from that darkness which sin has spread over our minds, so that we call good evil, and evil good. We think Satan's lies are the truth, and we esteem our merciful and gracious Creator, who gives us holy laws for our happiness, to be our enemy and not our friend. In the expressive words of Scripture, men walk by nature, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance

that is in them, because of the blindness (or hardness) of their heart.

The light which shines in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and intercession of our Redeemer, fully discovered to us by the teaching of the Spirit, dispels all this ignorance of God. We see the force of the direction, Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace with Him. is really and truly Love. All our hard thoughts of Him are vile ingratitude, and inexcusable blindness. The Gospel is thus sent to men to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith which is in Jesus.

#### THE BOOK OF LIFE

"There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."—Rev. xxi. 27.

THERE is a list of freemen belonging to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Their salvation has been decreed from eternity; they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. In the fulness of time God called them to Himself, outwardly by his word, and inwardly by his Spirit. Their names are on the Redeemer's roll, and they have subscribed with their hands to the Lord. They have ventured their souls on the merits of Jesus; they are freely justified by his grace, and have received his Spirit, and brought forth that fruit of good living which distinguishes those who belong to Christ.

If their sins be written against them in other books, in this book they are all struck through with the marks of the Redeemer's blood. They were blotted out according to that gracious promise, *I*, even *I*, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins (Isa. xliii. 25); having believed, they obtain the blessedness of those to whom God imputeth righteousness without works.

Yet even those whose names are in the Book of Life, are judged according to their works; for all are judged—Every one of us shall give account of himself to God: every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it (I Cor. iii. 13). Their judgment is necessary for two reasons: that the Divine justice and equity in the discrimination made between them and the wicked may be clearly seen, and that the proportion of their reward may be fixed. Though saved by grace, there are

yet different degrees of glory according to our fruitfulness in good works; for he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

But here is the blessedness of the Book of Life. It furnishes a plea to answer the various charges which lie against us—it records as its first name, if I may so say, that Prince of Life, the Head of his people, who bore their sins in his own body on the tree, and by whose obedience they are accounted righteous; who is the second Adam, through whose righteousness the free gift comes upon all who believe in Him unto justification of life. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

#### VII.

# HOPE IN HOURS OF DOUBT AND DESPONDENCY.

#### THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

"The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and profane, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." —I TIM. i. 9, 11.

THE beginning of this verse confirms both truths—that the law is good, and that it was not made against a righteous man; for what could more glorify the law than God's only-begotten Son coming down from heaven, fulfilling every jot and tittle of that law, and not only so, but also willingly enduring its penalty and curse? Rom. ii. 12—16; iii. 31. There we are shown that it could not be made against

a righteous man, for the curse and penalty were fully accomplished in the cross; all its shafts were buried in the body of Jesus; and now, instead of being a terror to the believer, it is the happy rule, received from his Redeemer, by which he is guided to happiness: it is no longer a guard to drag him to judgment, but a friendly guide to conduct and lead him along the path of life.

Every word of our text is beautiful. The blessed God, emphatically the happy one. Yes, our God is light, and our God is love; supremely happy in Himself, and diffusing happiness to all about Him. Let us be happy in his happiness, and rejoice in his joy; from it sprung our redemption. The glorious gospel, glorious, as it illustrated all the harmony, and perfection, and beauty of God's attributes. Jesus is the brightness of his glory; the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of

Jesus Christ; glorious as it changes and conforms us into the same image, beholding Him in the glass of the Gospel. Again, glorious, as it brings us to a participation of the same glory. We shall behold and partake of the glory of Christ himself.

Even the smallest measure of know-ledge of God, and love to Him, is not given us merely for ourselves; there is great love in God's gifts, but not partial love: we are made stewards of God's mysteries for the good of others. What a solemn obligation lies upon all in this matter! an obligation by which we are debtors to all who have not the light of God's grace, and for which we must render an account hereafter.

### THE VALUE OF SALVATION.

"We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—
ISAIAH XXV. 9.

IF, Christian reader, you are trusting only in a crucified Saviour; if you see the excellence and blessedness of his Gospel; if you have felt its efficacy in turning you from your sins, you have in these things cheering and delightful evidences that the Gospel has been to you an ordinance for your salvation; that you are among the saved; that you were chosen in Christ; that you are born of God, sanctified by his Spirit, upheld by his power, and that you shall be brought to his glory.

And who can fully declare the value of this salvation? Even in this life, to have a relief from the guilt and burden of sin; to have sufficient strength afforded us against the power of the enemy; to have

the spirit of adoption, and the hope of glory, may well gladden the heart in the midst of the greatest temporal sorrows. But eternity, though it will more fully discover the value of this salvation, will never exhaust it.

O Christian reader! to be among the saved at last; to lie in Abraham's bosom; to associate ever with the spirits of just men made perfect; to be free from all sin, and free to all holiness; to be without any curse, pain, or sorrow; and to be so filled with every blessing as to have, in the expressive language of Scripture, fulness of joy; to see Jesus, and to be ever with Him; to behold God as He is, and know as we are known; boundless, unutterable, everenduring and unalloyed bliss: this is the salvation which God has connected with the faithful hearing and due reception of Christ's word!

Is it not a delightful thought that there

are those now living on earth who shall in heavenly glory sing the song: Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!

Let us, above all things, seek to be numbered with them; let us pray with David, Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto thy people. Let us then inquire, most seriously and most anxiously, as a matter that concerns our eternal welfare, in what way we view the Gospel. If it be a stumbling-block, or foolishness, we are among the lost: if we receive it, on the other hand, as the wisdom of God, and his power has been manifested towards us through it in changing and renewing us, this may give us an assured hope that our character is that of a real disciple of Christ. Let us try and search hereby whose we are, and what we are.

#### THE PROBLEM SOLVED

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."—ISA. XL. 4, 5.

ALL is now disjointed, sickly, weak, and failing in its designed effect. Remedies multiply wants and defects. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered (Eccles. i. 15). The best planned institutions, the best laws, through the corruption of man and the power of Satan, disappoint our hopes. The law itself was weak through the flesh (Rom. viii. 3). No one adequately fulfils his relation to another; even the conscience of the Christian leads him constantly to condemn himself. Our comforts occasion our trials, and our very joys bring sorrows.

But the times of the restitution of all things are hastening on, when, not by the policy and wisdom of man, but by the effectual grace and loving-kindness of God our Saviour, they shall be restored to a state of sound health; when the disjointed members shall be made whole, as the withered hand by our Lord (Matt. xii. 13), or the blind eyes which were restored by his goodness to perfect sight (Mark viii. 25).

The kingdom of God, through unbelief, appears so distant, as hardly to be of any moment or importance to us; but real faith sees in it a character and magnitude according with the fulness in which it is brought forward in the pages of Scripture. Just as a man living upon the earth, thinks every object on the earth great and important in comparison of the sun, or of the stars; but supposing him to rise gradually above the earth, and approach the sun or the stars, the earth would sink into its

physical insignificance, and the glory of those greater worlds fill his whole soul: so it is with this kingdom; its supposed distance makes us think it of little moment. but the day is hastening on, when it shall occupy every mind, and engage every heart, and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa. xi. 9). The rich treasures with which the latter chapters of Isaiah are loaded, and the glories which are testified of through the sacred writings, have here ample space for their largest meaning. The whole world will indeed be blessed when under the happy dominion of our Lord and his glorified saints.

#### VIII.

### LIGHT IN HOURS OF DARKNESS.

#### HERE AND HEREAFTER.

"Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known."—I COR, xiii. 12.

Invisible things are now discovered to us, not as they are in themselves, but by visible things. We see something of the excellence of God in the various titles by which He reveals Himself. We hear of Him as our Father and our Portion, our Shield, and our exceeding great Reward. We are told that Christ is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King, and that we are to view Him as the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the World, and the Bread of Life. The Blessed Spirit is represented to

us as a Comforter and Sanctifier, as Purifying Fire, and Refreshing and Living Water.

Now, God is training up his children in the school of this world, for their heavenly and enduring state. .The man of the deepest wisdom, and of the most enlarged intellect, must say (as Solomon did) while here, I am but a little child-I speak as a child, I understand as a child, I think as a child. But our manhood will then have come. cease from human tuition. We shall rest in God. Oh, how cheering is the thought that multitudes of names that now divide the Church, and are made leaders of opposite parties, will, it may be well hoped, spend a blessed eternity together, every distinction lost in magnifying but one name—God, our Saviour.

All those knotty and difficult questions which now distract the Church will then

be fully and for ever answered. It will no more be difficult to reconcile the grace of God and the freedom of men, the sincere invitations of his Word and the final destruction of the wicked; his foreknowledge of their ruin, and that ruin wholly brought on them by their own faults. It will then be distinctly and clearly seen that God was, in all his dealings, infinitely and supremely full of wisdom, truth, and holiness, altogether just, of unbounded mercy and unparalleled love: in short, righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works.

Then shall we see face to face. Hence we shall have a clear, familiar, and intimate knowledge of God, making as great a difference as the knowledge which we have of a person only by report, and that which we have of him by personally seeing him and conversing with him from day to day.

#### THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."—
2 Peter iii. 9.

It is not merely a suspense of judgment that we sinful creatures require. A day of salvation, a season for obtaining renewed grace, is also of unspeakable moment, and the mediation of Jesus provides this. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

We are, in virtue of this, exhorted, as in an accepted time, in a day of salvation, not to receive the grace of God in vain, but to come out and be separate from an evil world, and return to our heavenly Father, who will receive us, and be a Father unto us, and we shall be dealt with as sons and

daughters. In this return to God, Christ is everything. No man cometh unto the Father but by Him; but both Jew and Gentile through Him have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Here we see the need of intercession to make suspended judgment a season of grace, and to open a way by which we may return to the holy Jehovah.

The many temptations which beset the children of God, and which they have not, through their still remaining carnal nature, power in themselves to overcome, show the necessity of continued intercession. We have trials within and without, domestic and public; temptations everywhere assault us, and a traitor within readily admits our worst foes. Oh, the pride, impurity, selfishness, worldliness, that seek lodgment and entertainment in those hearts which ought to be filled with God and his holy law! The humbling,

constant, and painful experience of this compels the Christian to look for help; and delightful is the Divine testimony, that Jesus knows our temptations and prays for us.

The just are not without sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But sin brings us afresh under the penalties of the broken law; the wages of sin at all times is death. Those who have obtained the righteousness which is by faith, still need the Mediator every day. All our services, too, are full of defects, and in themselves could not be accepted, but it is a blessed truth that they are now acceptable to God by Christ Jesus.

## THE CROSS THE TRUE MEASURE OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

"God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."—
ROM. v. 8.

Do your continual sins make you suspect his love? Oh, it is the depth of that love which makes Him wait for your salvation; account his long-suffering, salvation. He declares with a solemn oath, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.

But we have one proof which should silence every doubt. Look at the Lord Jesus Christ hanging on the cross; God's only beloved Son hanging there. He put Him to grief. And why? Because He loves us, loves even his sinful and rebellious children. It pleased the Lord to bruise

Him. View everything, however dark, in the light of the cross. Take this light with you, and it will dispel all darkness. Take this key with you, and it will unlock all the mysteries of his providence, and show love inscribed on them all. This Sun of Righteousness, our crucified Redeemer, paints a rainbow of glory on the darkest clouds that overhang our world.

It appears to me, that there is nothing in which we so wrong Him as in his name of love; in which we more dishonour Him than in entertaining low thoughts of his kindness and goodness. Oh, how base to doubt his love; there is nothing in which we more wrong our own souls, and deprive ourselves of joy, and peace, and holiness. Know, then, and believe his love. He hath loved us with an everlasting love, and every Christian can testify, With loving-kindness He has drawn us.

Unbelief is the soul-ruining sin. I

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beseech you strive against it. It is the most daring insult to the God of Truth; it is the greatest enemy to real holiness, spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness. Oh, realize the love of God to our souls. He loved us before we were born; He loved us before the world was. He loved us so, that not all our sins can quench his love; and He sheds this love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

He causes all things to work together for good to them that love God. He keeps us through faith unto salvation. He does not cease to love, and will not fail to watch over us till He brings us to share his glory for ever. Oh, who can tell the riches of his loving-kindness—who can tell the tenderness of our Father's heart towards us his rebellious children!

#### GRACE AND GLORY.

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."—Rom. viii. 24, 25.

Our Lord asserts, He that heareth my words, and believeth in Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life. This is the road in which the saints that now fill the heavenly mansions once walked on earth. Would you attain the glory above? tread in the steps of the saints below, and thus be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Now, under the clearest discourses of the ministry, and the fullest privileges of the Gospel, we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known. There is a veil of flesh between us and the world of spirits; there is a body of sin and death that intercepts our view, and obscures our prospect, and hinders our full knowledge.

True it is, we have the cheering light of God's Holy Word (an inestimable advantage), a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths, to guide us safe in our way to heaven. Christians are like men travelling along a high road in the night, with a sufficient light in their hands to guide them through to their home; but they can see little or nothing of the beauties and glories of the country through which they pass: the most splendid landscape may be spread before them; the hills, and dales, and rivers, and woods may enrich the scene with diversified beauty; the most curious and delicate plants and flowers may adorn the whole, and yet the pilgrim

be either unconscious of it, or unable to discern it.

But by and by the night will pass away, the morning of the resurrection will come, and then, oh then! what tongue can tell the enraptured emotions of the faithful servant of Christ, discovering infinite beauties, where he was ready to think all was gloom and dreariness, magnificence and glory bursting on his ravished sight, beyond all his conceptions! What heart can imagine the blessed result which will assuredly succeed to our now walking by faith, when the veil is removed, and the glorious light of life shines upon us, and we behold that heavenly country, of which it is said, There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

#### GLAD TIDINGS.

"I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—LUKE ii. 10, 11.

THE Gospel opens to our glad and grateful minds a new world of grace and beauty, goodness and glory, of which we had no previous conception. It reveals to us a new and mysterious, but most lovely, winning, and attractive Being, appearing on earth in our very nature. Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ is in the Gospel made known to us in all the glories of his Godhead, and in all the tenderness of his manhood, as one with us, and notwithstanding our fallen and miserable state, delighting in us, and determined to save us.

The Gospel reveals the unsearchable

all things under his feet, and given Him to be the Head over all things to his Church. The Gospel further shows us what He will do hereafter, when He returns in his glory. How He will appear the second time without sin unto salvation to them that look for Him -how He will raise them, and change them, and fashion them like Himself, and translate them to his own heavenly home, and present them to his Father faultless, and give them a royal and everlasting kingdom with Him for ever and ever. As this is more and more discovered to our minds in the holy Scriptures, through the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, a thousand streams of love flow into the heart, and fill the whole soul, in its innermost recesses, with love, glad and grateful love, to Jesus.

# COURAGE FOR HOURS OF CONFLICT.

#### THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT.

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

—2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

UNDER the type of a soldier, St. Paul here explains our situation as Christians. A soldier is separated from his friends and all worldly occupations, to give his whole time and care to the warfare; not that he loses his friends or property, but he must not abuse them, but devote himself to his occupation as a soldier. So a Christian, living in the world, but not of the world—his life a conflict, a struggle. When do we get entangled in this life? when this world and its concerns have the chief place in our

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hearts; when our affections are set on things below; when our souls are glued to this world; when even its troubles, its cares and anxieties, unduly burden us, and we forget to repose on his care and love who careth for us; or, indeed, we may get entangled with our sins if we do not cast ourselves upon Him entirely.

Go abroad, and see how men are entangled with the concerns of this life, like the flies which men entangle by placing a sticky sweet to attract them, and they come and sip the sweet, but cannot get away, and are unable to soar upward, and thus are destroyed; let us know and believe this, that our lusts are our enemies, and that our only safety is in continual warfare. That he may please him, that is, that we may please Christ. I hope the aim of our hearts is to please Him. We follow Him to certain victory, nothing else is in his heart than that; the whole

earth shall be blessed with his love—He means to conquer all, and that for us. Nelson used to say to his officers before a battle, "A peerage, or Westminster Abbey." Not a peerage awaits us, but a glorious kingdom; the saints shall be kings and priests. Remember, all the promises in the Revelation are to him that overcometh, and the strength for it is in the first verse-strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We may strive very hard, but all may be useless, unless we strive lawfully. Look at Paul before his conversion, exceeding mad against the Church, very zealous, vehement, ardent for God; but ignorant, he strove unlawfully; see him after conversion, patient, persevering, toiling, labouring, he was striving lawfully. Christ must be the end of our striving, not to establish our own righteousness, but to attain a meek, loving, Christian-like spirit, submitting to the righteousness of God.

#### THE CHRISTIAN'S AIM.

"When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, Say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."—LUKE XVII. 10.

CHRISTIANS are too full of all-important work to have any time for waste and dissipation. Change of scene, and change of employment, will give necessary relaxation; but in all, let the great work of doing good be advancing. In sickness or in health, in trial or in prosperity, in poverty or in abundance, in sorrow or in joy, the eye should be single here for God and his kingdom, and glorifying Him. The more the days are evil, the more is time to be redeemed. If we are laid aside, it is only to open another way of glorifying God by patience, and submission, and resignation, by prayer and thanksgiving, and thus every one who comes near us will obtain a

I would remind the reader of one unspeakable privilege connected with all our graces, all our duties, and all our works. It was the privilege which comforted the devout Herbert on his dying bed. On the day of his death, when reminded of his many acts of mercy, he replied: "They be good works if they be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and not otherwise." There is not only for us the blessed truths to be believed, that Jesus has loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and that our persons are accepted in the beloved; but there is also for us the daily privilege of offering up all our services in his name, and having all we do washed and made clean in his blood: these are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. What Christian is not bur-

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dened and humbled to the dust by the sins of his best doings. All our spiritual clothing, our humility, our charity, our prayers, our kindness to others, our gifts of every character, all our robes of righteousness imparted to us, as worn by us, are soon polluted, and need the continual application of the blood of the Son of God, which cleanseth from all sin, that they may be made white. Thus shall we be found at the last among those who are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple.

#### THE HOLY TRINITY OUR GUARDIAN.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."— Jude 24, 25.

The ascription of glory seems directed to the Trinity—the great object—and the whole aim of a Christian, the very end for which he is formed being to enjoy God and glorify Him for ever. First, notice the description of that Being whom we are all to glorify. He is able to keep us from falling; the Christian has confidence in this ability, and reposes on it; looks at the ground of this confidence—there is ground for it in the works of creation. What wonders in the heavens over our head, and the earth under our feet; what infinite variety and perfection! He who

made all, must be able to keep us; so in redemption, He who redeemed all, when lost and undone, at the costly price of the blood of his Son, must be able to keep us. So if we look at the different Persons of the Trinity—God the Father in his infinite wisdom, Almighty power and boundless love. Oh, how able He is to keep. God the Son, who has all power in heaven and earth, has declared: My sheep shall not perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand—all-sufficient is He to keep. It is the daily work of the blessed Spirit who abides with us for ever, omnipotent to help us in all our infirmities, to sustain us and to keep us from falling. To preserve an immortal soul from falling, is like preserving a spark alive in the ocean; is like preserving sheep among wolves. What a precious truth, then, it is, that God is able to hold up our goings in his paths to the end. He has in Christ made a covenant

of grace with us, that having begun a good work in our hearts, He will carry it on to the end; that He will put his fear into our hearts so that we shall not depart from Him. Jesus, who knows what agony and remorse falls occasionally to his children, engages, if they lean on Him, to keep them from falling. May we then cleave unto the Lord, and put our whole trust in Him.

And to present you faultless. God, our Saviour, does this for us; the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is concerned in our being thus presented faultless. The Father promised it from eternity, the Son accomplished the purchase of it, and daily now lives as Mediator to effect it, and the Holy Ghost works in us, day by day, to prepare us for it.

#### CHRIST THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH.

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."—John xi. 26.

In the evil sense, the believer never dies. It is our Saviour Christ who says, Whoso-ever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die; If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. All that is evil in death is by Christ so removed, that the believer may say, Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will far no evil.

As it regards the body, if it be for a moment an enemy, it is the last enemy, and will assuredly at length be utterly de-

stroyed. Christ has also the keys of death, and can, and does set at liberty all its captives. And as it regards the soul, death is our best friend; it is equally with life itself numbered among the Christian privileges: Whether life or death, all are yours. It is a dark door, the shadow of death; but the darkness is on this side, and not on the other; when it opens, it introduces us to light, and life, and glory, and shuts out for ever all darkness and misery.

It is the end of trial and temptation; no more conflicts nor warfare, no more sins nor sorrows, can harass and injure the happy believer. He is shut in by death from the world of death, and brought by this his last enemy safe into the mansions of endless life. The Scriptures lift up the veil that hides the eternal world, and show us the angels waiting round the pillow of the dying believer, longing to

have another happy spirit added to them. The Scriptures show the Christian that to him this is the land of darkness and tears, and the unseen world the true land of light and joy: In thy presence is fulness of joy. May we have but a good hope, through grace, of this happiness; and we shall long, not for life, but for death (Phil. i. 23), and say, with David, My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? (Ps. xlii. 2).

Christians, let your lights be burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching.

### THE EXCEEDING WEIGHT OF GLORY.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."—

1 Cor. ii. 9.

It is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It is so great, that Christ himself comes from heaven to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. Think of our bodies, fashioned like unto his glorious body, spiritual, incorruptible, raised in power and glory. Think of our inward man, perfectly conformed in every thought and wish, feeling and affection, to the holy, spiritual, heavenly, meek, and loving mind of Jesus. Think of our being companions of such for ever. Think, then, of the direct communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in eternal glory; the angels our

co-equals, the new heavens our eternal home; promoting the happiness of the new earth our own happy employment, and this for ever and ever.

Oh! does not the heart pant after this, and amidst all the troubles and conflicts of this present scene, are we not often saying, Oh that I had wings like a dove! then would I flee away and be at rest. Then shall I sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of beaven. Then shall I see the fathers of old, who lived before the deluge. Then shall I be with patriarchs, and judges, and righteous kings who followed; the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the holy Church once scattered throughout all the world and now gathered into their everlasting home, are there. All I have loved in Christ below; all whose thoughts and works have proved that they loved the

COMFORT FOR THE HOUR OF DEATH. 117 Saviour, and have endeared them to my soul, will be there.

Nor these alone. Then shall we realize the rapturous song which has so often below raised our souls to God, "We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting. To Thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein. To Thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory." This scene of bliss is before us; this glory is at hand. Meditate upon it. Live for it.

#### RESURRECTION GLORY.

"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."—DAN. xii. 2, 3.

The difference between our present bodies and our glorified bodies is illustrated at large in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xv. 35—50. Nothing of present weakness, sickness, or infirmity will be left. We may see some of the peculiarities of the risen body in the visits of angels to our earth. They assumed a human body, and made it visible or disappeared just as they wished. They ate and drank with man. We shall be equal with the angels. We see the same powers in our Saviour's risen body. He could transport Himself instantly from place to place, appear in a room when

doors were closed, and disappear. The body raised is a spiritual body, an incorruptible body, a glorious body, a powerful body. The righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, and as the stars for ever and ever; and as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.

When thus raised from the dead, and, meeting the Lord in the air, the whole body of the saints are collected together, the judgment of their works takes place, that each one, like Daniel, may stand in his lot at the end of his days, and the reaping may be according to the sowing. He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

What an unspeakably glorious, what an all-important, all-thrilling event is this resurrection! Why are we all grovelling so here below, instead of by faith and

heavenly-mindedness being already risen with Christ, and seeking those things which are above.

Glorious was the scene when Enoch was translated, or when Elijah's chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared in the whirlwind, and took him to his glory; yet more glorious was the scene, when, surrounded with his disciples, the risen Saviour slowly and majestically ascended by his own power and glory before them while blessing them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. How unspeakably glorious, then, will be that full result of his resurrection and ascension, when crowding from every country, in glorious resurrection bodies, shining as the sun, at one and the same moment, the myriads and myriads of his saints of every age are all gathered into his presence, where is fulness of joy, and are ever with the Lord.

# VICTORY OVER DEATH.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory."—I COR. xv. 55.

As to DEATH, the Christian's conquest is, and shall be, complete. Jesus our Redeemer came to deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. It was his gracious determination, I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues (Hosea xiii. 14). Hence, He has changed the very character of death. It is now to fall asleep in Jesus (Acts vii. 60); to die is gain (Phil. i. 21). It is numbered among our privileges (1 Cor. iii. 22). And so far from being a terror to the believer, in his best state of mind, he says, I desire to depart and be with Christ. It unveils to him more of the now invisible reality of all his hopes. How shall I describe it? My brethren, it is the friendly hand that draws aside the veil of flesh which hides from us the Saviour. Death discovers to us more of Immanuel, and leads us where we shall be with Him for ever; and when he has fully executed all his offices, death shall himself be cast into the lake of fire and destroyed for ever. Jesus dying, and entering in his own person the regions of the dead, through death, has destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is the devil, and has lighted up all the gloomy vale; He also goes with his people when they pass through the valley, so that they need fear no evil.

As to THE GRAVE, true, it is the house appointed for all living; but the Saviour penetrated its recesses. His own body lay in the silent tomb, that the grave itself might be sanctified to every one of his followers. He undertook our cause against

this enemy: I will ransom them from the power of the grave. O grave, I will be thy destruction (Hosea xiii. 14). And now, what is the grave, but the seed-plot or nursery which prepares the body sown in it for a beautiful and glorious resurrection. True, it may seem buried, and, for a season, lost; but it shall revive as the corn, and come forth, no longer a vile but a glorious body, to flourish for ever in the courts of our God.

# THOUGHTS OF HEAVEN.

#### THE PERFECT LOVE OF HEAVEN.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."—Eph. iii. 17—19.

THE love which a parent has to a child, provided for in all its helplessness, often rescued from imminent danger, trained up from its infancy, and fitted for usefulness and happiness, how tender and endeared it is! Such delight has the Father, and such delight has the Son, in each of his redeemed children. The perfect confidence and love of an affectionate child,

rejoicing in the smiles of a beloved and revered father, how precious it is: but, oh! how all these figures must fall short of this heavenly communion!

Even here, he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him; and, I trust, many of us have tasted all the peace and heavenly-mindedness, and joy of such blessed feelings; but, oh! how soon are they disturbed by temptations and trials of this life! But there love is the universal atmosphere of the whole heavenly kingdom. God is love! and his people partake of his Divine nature for ever.

O Christian reader, the full flow, the full joy of love! It is even now the most delightful thing God gives us here below. But to be in it and have it in us; to live in the constant assurance of unceasing love, without one partial, one selfish, one vain, one sinful feeling; to be ever in the presence, the fellowship, the participation of

all the joys of the most powerful, wise, holy, and good One, the most excellent of all beings, and the most beloved of all objects; basking in the full beams of heavenly love, and diffusing those beams to others more and more: this is to experience that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light of the heavenly ferusalem.

We are one in Him and He in us. One in sharing his glory, and one in partaking of his own blessedness, realizing to the full the promise and the prayer of the Redeemer, The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one. The very title, the Lord God Almighty, shows the all-sufficiency, the covenant security, and the omnipotence by which this blessedness is assured. The union of this title with that of the Lamb on the throne shows, also, the Divine glory of Jesus.

#### THE FINISHED TEMPLE.

"Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."—2 Cor. vi. 16.

WHILE we are on earth and in our present state, distinctions of place and time in worship are needed. The Gospel frees us from the bondage of a self-righteous observance of them, but does not set them aside as means of grace and helps to communion with God. But, in this final glory, the Church triumphant is raised above all these outward forms and distinctions into direct and immediate fellowship with God. Oh, what tongue can tell, what mind conceive, the clearness, the fulness, the joy, the rich variety of blessings then to be attained!

When our Lord bids his saints take possession, He says, Inherit the kingdom

prepared for you from the foundation of the world. The names of those who inherit this kingdom were written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. They were chosen in Christ before the world was. And for six thousand years since, the Lord has been gathering and preparing the lively stones for this building; for six thousand years, infinite wisdom, almighty power, and boundless love have been preparing for its blessedness and glories. The vastness of the preparations, the all-sufficiency of Him who prepares, the time in which He has been at work, show that we cannot conceive of it too highly.

The excellence of the foretaste already, in the PRESENT EXPERIENCE of Christians, assures us of the full blessedness yet to come. The Holy Spirit of promise is now the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.

Christians know now the comfort of forgiven iniquity through the blood of Jesus. They glory in his blood and righteousness alone; they have received of his Holy Spirit; they have already tasted that the Lord is good; the light of his love has shed joy in their souls; they have experienced the consolation that is in Christ; they know the sweet feelings of love to others, and the happiness of making them happy; communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, has filled them with holy delight; they would not exchange such joys for all that the world calls good or great. Amidst all their trials and temptations, reproaches and difficulties, they can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. What, then, must be the fulness of joy when every sorrow shall flee away, and every joy be perfected and eternal?

#### PEACE RESTORED.

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him."—Eph. i. 10.

THERE is a progress of truth in the whole Church and in each individual Christian. as well as an increase of the lovers of the truth. Religion has indeed always been from the beginning one; the heart of a sinner under a Divine influence, returning to a reconciled Father through a Mediator. But this has been unfolding, and enlarging, and confirming from age to age. We see it in the creeds of the churches, from the Apostles' Creed to the full Confessions of Faith at the Reformation. Fresh truths to unite the children of God have ever been beaming forth from the great light of his Word, which God has given us; and while for a time they may have increased controversy, in the issue they have been established, and have more united the children of God in a fuller acknowledgment of the truth. It is our privilege and our duty to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we may learn the same blessed fact in the increase of the numbers of the Lord's people; first, almost the single family of Abraham, then the nation of Israel, then its diffusion in the Roman Empire, and now its spreading abroad in every land.

When the foundations of the earth were laid, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy: God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. But sin entered, and marred this good creation; and for six thousand years sin has been manifesting its exceeding sinfulness, and separating earth from heaven; but Jesus shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth, and the

isles shall wait for his law. It pleases the Father by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. His own prayer, Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, is hastening to its accomplishment. As the still waters furnish a full reflection of the heavens above, so will the new earth, in all its variety and unity, beauty and harmony, be a full reflection of the new heavens.

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory; and so it will be in the resurrection of the just. Oh, blessed time, when they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. It is advancing day by day, and every fresh convert to Christ hastens the completion of the number of his elect.

#### ETERNAL GLORY.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—2 Cor. iv. 17.

THE GLORY OF THE SAINTS IS AN EVER-This is what crowns LASTING GLORY. the whole. If it could ever terminate; if it was only for a period, however lengthened, heaven would lose its brightest joy. No. It will never end: it is perfected happiness, and it is happiness for ever. Have we not been sometimes lost in joy and surprise when a good, infinitely beyond our thoughts, has quite unexpectedly been bestowed upon us? We could hardly believe or realize it for joy of heart. What will it be, then, when the full tide of heavenly and eternal joy fills the soul; when we can say, in a fuller strain of joy than David could ever utter, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou has brought me hitherto. This is an eternal kingdom! This is an eternal joy! We are pillars in the temple of God, and shall go no more out. This is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Well may the glorified saints say, "O happy sufferings, and light afflictions, which were but for a moment, which have worked out for me such an exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

What a poor earthly tabernacle will the noblest of earthly palaces then be seen to be, when we compare it with the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Princely gifts are uncommon and splendid gifts, what will then be this gift of the King of kings, when He fulfils his promise of eternal life, and the abundant entrance is ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then,

then only, shall we fully comprehend those words, In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. In the meanwhile, the surest token of our partaking of this glory is, sufferings joyfully endured for Christ: Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance (Heb. x. 34). If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you (1 Pet. iv. 14). It is this hope of glory that will strengthen us in the midst of the fiery conflict through which the Church has yet to pass—the last affliction before the revealed glory.

## THE VISION OF GOD IN HEAVEN.

"We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."—

I JOHN iii. 2.

THEN we shall behold Him face to face; that is, have an actual, clear, distinct, and full, personal sight of Him: Then shall I know even as also I am known (I Cor. xiii. 12). And yet further we shall HAVE FULL CAPACITY OF BODY AND SOUL, FOR EVER BEHOLDING AND EVER DELIGHTING IN HIS GLORY. The importance of this may be seen in the effects which a manifestation of his glory to saints living on the earth had. The effect was astounding and overwhelming. The Israelites were in terror when they heard his voice on Mount Sinai. Moses was told. There shall no man see Me and live. Isaiah cries out. Woe is me, I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts (Isa. vi. 5). Ezekiel fell upon his face (Ezek. i. 28). Daniel, the beloved, was left without strength, and a great quaking fell on him (Dan. x. 7, 8). Even John, who lay in the bosom of the Lord, fell at his feet as dead (Rev. i. 17). The disciples on the mount feared and knew not what they said (Luke ix. 28—35). But it will not be so in our spiritual, incorruptible, and glorified bodies.

We shall have given to us an inward power to receive and comprehend his glory, and to enter with full delight of soul into all its excellence. It is this change which fits us for beholding that which would otherwise be to us a consuming fire. We may see in a thousand instances how important it is that the nature of the creature should be adapted to the element in which it lives. A fish has its enjoyment in the, to us, cold, dark

waters, which would extinguish the life of other creatures not adapted to live there; but place the fish on a sunny bank, and the brighter the beams of the sun, and the more it gladdens all around, the more miserable it is to the fish, which soon expires.

There is a perfect adaptation therefore in our resurrection bodies to this beatific vision. We cannot indeed describe it, for it has not been visibly manifested. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. We may, however, hence gather, that the departed spirit, while separate from the body, cannot be in full possession and enjoyment of all the glory to come. The departed spirit is in rest and joy, but has not yet reached its fullest blessedness (Col. iii. 1—4).

#### THE UNITY OF HEAVEN.

"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."—JOHN xvii. 23.

CHRISTIANS have a good hope, through grace, of dwelling together for ever in perfect union in the heavenly kingdom. All the lesser differences which separate us here, will then be for ever merged. Let us often contemplate the delightful hope of that perfect oneness with which all his servants, both small and great, of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, shall unite for ever in hallelujahs of thanksgiving. Let us think of the time when every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, shall be heard by us, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever.

We are already come even now to the foot of that heavenly mount, we are raised to the sight through faith already of these heavenly places. Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

We have indissoluble and multiplying links of connection with all this glory. We which remain shall soon be caught up together with the dead in Christ raised from their graves to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Then shall every human name be gladly sunk in our magnifying the one great name, the name of Jesus, and every song have for its one chorus, Worthy is the Lamb. Let the blissful anticipation of our being with Him, and beholding his glory, and for ever together glorifying Him, raise us more and more above all our little disuniting and dividing thoughts here, to the magnificent oneness, in which we shall exult through eternity.

As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, is the measure of union which our Lord desires for his people. What an astonishing, sublime, and perfect union is by our Lord here set before us in this prayer! It may well be viewed as a sure ground for all our hopes. It is not a partial or a mere outward, but an intelligent, spiritual, heavenly, universal, and entire union. Had not our Lord Jesus Christ himself desired it for us, how could we possibly have thought of such a perfect, Divine, and glorious oneness?

#### XII.

## SOLEMN THOUGHTS.

#### THE ENTRANCE TO ETERNITY.

"So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom,"—Ps. xc. 12.

You stand on the margin of eternal things; the immense ocean of eternity is stretched out before you; you must soon embark upon it. Time, how short!—life, what a vapour! As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth; the wind passeth over it, and it is gone (Ps. ciii. 15, 16). He may die in a thousand different ways each hour. Anything is strong enough, when commissioned by your God, to bring you to death, and launch you on this boundless

sea of eternity. Here is one striking character of death; it lifts up the hangings that hide eternity; and it shows us the reality of what we now see not: death is in this view the entrance upon eternity.

On your life, then, thus uncertain, depends a happy or a miserable eternity. I appeal to your understandings as men, to your conscience as accountable beings, to your reason as reasonable beings, follow your true interests. Shall the tenant at will thus needlessly provoke and offend to the uttermost that landlord on whom he is wholly dependent? Shall the sailor on the mast-top fall asleep while the stormy ocean tosses the vessel to and fro with its swelling waves? Then much less should we, on the brink of eternity, offend our God and be unconcerned about our souls.

Oh, never forget there are multitudes that shall everlastingly perish. Your Saviour has declared it in the plainest terms: Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat (Matt. vii. 13). Remember the possibility of being deceived—There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov. xvi. 25). And oh, if deceived, how fatal is the mistake! How terrible the reflection, "I looked for heaven, and behold, I am lost, for ever lost in hell!"

Oh, how Satan, the great deceiver, imposes on men! They take a pebble for a pearl; they prefer a flint to a diamond; they choose time before eternity, and strut about in the momentary delusion, as if adorned with real wealth and glory.

#### THE LAWFUL USE OF THE LAW.

"We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully."—I TIM. i. 8.

How few Christians of the present day can say this from the heart, now that the gospel has been so fearfully abused, that the law is almost entirely thrown overboard. But the law is indeed good: not only as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, but also as the standard of our daily conduct; good in its political constitution, good in its ceremonies and shadows of Christ, good in its moral character, as the only path of wisdom and happiness, if a man use it lawfully. We use it unlawfully when we use it in a self-righteous manner, setting aside Christ as our righteousness and strength; but we use it lawfully when we use it for conviction of sin, for self-examination, to lead to Christ,

and pray for grace to keep it as our rule of life and path of happiness.

A very important part of saving knowledge is connected with a just view of the law and the gospel—not being under bondage to the law on the one hand, not using it self-righteously on the other; not using the gospel as a cloak of licentiousness, but as a quickening and stirring motive to duty; being not without the law to God, but under the law to Christ; standing free from its condemnation; receiving it from the hands of Christ, as the Lord's freemen, as our path of happiness and wisdom.

Observe the connection between this important knowledge and the gospel. Knowing this (verse 9), according to the glorious gospel (verse 11), that the law was not made for a righteous man, or rather, is not in condemnation against a righteous man. Now, in one sense, there is none righteous; no, not one; but, in another sense, all the

children of God have a real righteousness -first, through faith in Christ, his righteousness is imputed to them; secondly, through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, they have, though in much imperfection, a delight in the law of God, after the inward man, so that a Christian can say, Oh how I love thy law; and in glory these imperfect beginnings shall be perfected. All the shafts of the law were buried in the body of Jesus, and now, instead of being a terror to the believer, it is the happy rule, received from his Redeemer, by which he is guided to happiness: it is no longer a guard to drag him to judgment, but a friendly guide to conduct and lead him along the path of life.

#### THE GREAT ACCOUNT.

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."—Heb. ix, 28,

EVER remember this great account, that you must one day give at the judgment-seat of Christ, that every hour as it passes along tends to fix the character of your final and eternal condition. Often ask yourselves, How will this appear in the day of final account and retribution? Is my course such as in the great, the last judgment will be approved?

Let every one truly repent of sin. This is St. Paul's practical application of this doctrine: God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained.

Let the Christian, however, look at this day, not with dread, but with cheering expectation. Brethren, God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. To them that look for Him, He will appear the second time without sin unto salvation. self-righteous and the unconverted may regard this as a day of terror; the believer should not do so, but rather, joyful through hope and rooted in charity, may anticipate this as the day which will consummate his blessedness, and end the course of all sin, restrain every iniquity in the prison of hell, and begin the unmingled reign and triumph of peace, and holiness, and happiness. O joyful day, when Christ shall appear and we shall appear with Him in glory! O happy season, which shall for ever terminate darkness, and sin, and sorrow, and land us in his presence and kingdom, in whose presence is fulness of joy.

The Christian may bless God that it will soon arrive. To him it is a joyful sound that his Lord says, Surely I come quickly, and his heart replies, Amen! even so come, Lord Jesus. Are the pleasures of sin for a little season so precious as to recompense the loss of all this joy? Oh, surely it is not so. Then from henceforth be in earnest—make sure of this one point, SALVATION.

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